

ROBERTS MAKES NEW MOVE

ENEMY RETREATING BEFORE GATERS, WHO OCCUPY BETHULIE—SUCCESS OF TWO DARING BRITISH BOATS—TRANSVALERS THREATEN FREE STATES FOR REFUSING TO DEFEND BLOEMFONTEIN—SCENES AT THE SURRENDER—JOURNALS 40 MILES NORTH OF BLOEMFONTEIN

Special Cable Despatch to The Times.
From The Times's Correspondent with Gen. Roberts.
BLOEMFONTEIN, March 15, 9:05 A. M.—When the British troops entered this city on Tuesday they found that it presented a regular Sunday appearance. The shops were all closed and the people on the streets were wearing their Sunday attire.

Many of the residents declared that they had expected the place would be bombarded. The correspondent of The Times had a conversation today with Councillor Daly, who described an embittered meeting of the Executive Council that was held the day prior to the surrender. After the meeting President Steyn boarded a train and proceeded to Kroonstad, where he has established his government.

The Transvaal Boers sought to compel the Free States to resist the British to the end, but their efforts were of no avail. A messenger was sent to the Boer camp on the Modder River with the information that the Free State Boers would not attempt to hold Bloemfontein, which has no fortifications, against Gen. Roberts, they knowing that to attempt to make a defence would result in the practical destruction of the town.

This message excited the indignation of the Transvaalers, who threatened to pull Bloemfontein to pieces. The residents were, therefore, uncertain whether the English or their own allies of the Transvaal would bombard the town.

Therefore, when the British entered there was considerable rejoicing, as their presence would prevent an attack upon the place by the Transvaalers.

The signs on the shops and all the decorations here would lead any one to believe that the place is an English town.

The first troops to enter the city were the Carabineers.

The detachment which rode out from the city on Tuesday morning formally to tender the surrender of the capital to Gen. Roberts consisted of Landroft Papefous, Dr. Kellner, the Mayor, and Mr. Fraser, a member of the Volksraad.

LONDON, March 16.—At the opening of the new chapter of the war, immediate interest centres in the fate of the Boer forces, which are in retreat northward from Cape Colony, where they have been defending the line of the Orange River.

Gen. Roberts sends this despatch concerning his latest move:
"BLOEMFONTEIN, March 15, 7:55 P. M.—Gen. Roberts crossed the Orange River and occupied Bethulie this morning. Gen. Buller, with 2,500 of the Guards Brigade, two guns and a small body of mounted infantry, left in three trains this morning to join hands with Gatacre and Clements. He passed Bethulie at 4:30 P. M., without meeting opposition. We have been supplied with food, clothing, and other necessities, and the troops are in good spirits, and the Boers are in a state of confusion."

A correspondent telegraphing from Bethulie describes some exciting incidents in connection with the saving of the wagon bridge that point which the Boers had mined. Lieut. Popham of the Derbyshire Regiment crossed unopposed during a storm of shot and shell and cut the connecting wires. He discovered several boxes of dynamite and returned and took a party of his regiment, who crossed and carried off the dynamite. At night Capt. Grant removed the charges from the borings and threw them into the river. He also discovered the remaining wires.

The courageous exploits of Capt. Grant and Lieut. Popham coincided, fortunately for the British, with an equally daring feat on the northward of Bloemfontein. There Major Weston, of the engineers, attached to Gen. Buller's brigade, passed the Boer lines on the evening of March 12 with ten men, and cut the telegraph and blew up the railways, thereby preventing the removal of the engines and cars in Bloemfontein.

Gen. Roberts was thus enabled to promptly despatch a force to intercept the Boers who Gen. Gatacre holds in front. That this force reached Bethulie, thirty-five miles distant, in a record time is a matter of great interest, in view of the necessity for constant reconnaissance of the track and the positions from which it could be commanded.

It is hardly expected that Gen. Buller's advance will not be opposed. If the burghers at Nereus' Point and Bethulie are retreating by means of the railway and are unaware of the occupation of Bloemfontein, a collision between them and the Guards' column is inevitable.

Meanwhile Commandant-General Joubert is reported to have arrived at Grandfontein, about forty miles north of Bloemfontein, to assume command of the Boers, whose headquarters are apparently on the Modder River.

The correspondent of the Daily News at Bloemfontein represents Weston's track-making as having been completed. The advance of the Boers is reported to have been arrested on Tuesday, but there is no other indication that the Boers at present are acting except on the defensive. The position in Bloemfontein is that they will defend themselves.

The Boers' retreat and long stories of the British entry into the Free State capital, there seems to have been some scenes at the meeting of the Executive Council mentioned in The Times's Bloemfontein despatch. President Steyn presided. Mr. Fraser, the President's chief, was fully described in South Africa and he denounced Mr. Steyn as a coward for asking enough moral courage to accept the situation. The President remained unmoved.

The envoy that Gen. Roberts sent to demand the surrender of the town was a captured member of the Executive Council, named Papefous. He, like John Steyn, the President's brother, was a willing prisoner. The scene of the formal handing over of the keys of the town was the summit of the mountain of the Boers, known as how to defend. Here Gen. Roberts waited the Boers, the muzzles of his guns pointing grimly toward the capital. When the delegates had climbed the hill and the delegates, who had received with gratification the assurance that the lives and property of the inhabitants would not be injured if there was no further opposition. The interview was entirely free from any sense of humiliation. The delegates, though undemonstrative, seemed relieved that the anxiety was over.

The British found no wounded Boers in the town. Gen. Roberts asked if they had been

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